

July 27, 2004 – August 3, 2004
Surgery and Hospital stay at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

July 27, 2004

Today is Tuesday. It seems that the odds are against him, but if we have hope and faith, and everyone's prayers, just perhaps a miracle can happen and Darren will walk again. Darren is recuperating after Sunday's surgery. When the surgeon examined him yesterday morning, he found a bit more strength in his left side (arm) than he had before surgery. The right side was about the same. Any positive we can find is important and we are trying very hard to take baby steps each day. He did not need a breathing tube after surgery, and he takes oxygen now only intermittently as needed. His coloring is good, and he is fully coherent and able to communicate. "My friend Betty" (that's for you, Carol!) is an OT, and she was here last night. She sees a lot of patients a day after surgery, and she Darren looked great. When I hear things like that, it keeps my spirits up. The days will be very busy now, as more and more people come in to see him (drs, therapists) so he is worn out by the afternoon. Then he rests. Today, John's closest friend, Brian Sackett will be visiting, and boy does he need him! He is having such a hard time. Arianne has been our rock and source of support. She is taking such good care of her brother and is his "personal angel." I am holding up OK, trying to stay focused on each baby step and any little progress. I lose it over the course of the day, at different times, but I am trying to stay strong. My mom is here, and she, too, is solid as a rock. OK, I need to go now to see the night nurse before he leaves (the hospital is WONDERFUL), and see Darren as soon as wakes. I think John needs to come home over the weekend for some necessary office needs. (Yes, he should go). I think maybe Sat or Sun, and I don't want him driving. If we could have people to drive him back and forth in the same day, that would be preferable, as I don't want him spending the night alone, nor would he stay with anyone. Think about that, and coordinate with Carol, if possible.

Carol, you have no idea of how confident I feel having you help with the communication. The internet expenses are high, so I won't be checking e-mail very much, but I'll try. You can always call me on my cell phone. If I can answer, I will, otherwise it will go to my voicemail.

Please continue praying for Darren, and thanks to everyone for all you're doing.

Love Cindy

July 28, 2004

I spoke briefly with Cindy a few minutes ago. She was at the hospital waiting for the doctor to come in. Darren was still sleeping. She didn't have much news to share at this point. She did not compose a status email for you all before leaving the hotel this morning.

- Carol

July 29, 2004

Today is Thursday. Please know that your love and support is a comfort to us all, and knowing that you are reading this, leaving messages for us, and praying is important. I love hearing your voices, and I know that you know I cannot call you all back, and that you understand.

My usual routine is to get to the hospital before 7AM so I can see the night nurse before he or she leaves. I also try to be there before Darren wakes up. Ari is always with me. The day is very busy with doctors, therapists, nurses, etc. A steady stream of people.

For the past two days, the therapists have gotten Darren into a chair. Their goal was 1 hr each on the 1st 2 days and Darren did almost 2 hours both days! It helps during that time if there is something good on TV, or if dinner comes, then there is "something to do" while he is sitting up. He is alert, has his usual sense of humor, and is VERY interested in monitoring his own care: what are the blood pressure levels, heart rate, when is it time to be turned over while in bed, or tilted back while sitting, etc. He is an inquisitive patient.

Darren has started eating better and is drinking thickened juices like crazy. We tried a smoothie from the cafeteria yesterday, but that proved to be too thick and brought on a coughing fit. His diaphragm muscles are not strong enough to help him cough. Sometimes the nurses have to use "assisted coughing" to help him. Also, medicated breathing treatments help to break up the phlegm and keep him breathing more regularly and evenly.

Each day we look for progress and positive signs, no matter how small. The goal is to medically stabilize him and move him into intermediate care. He's in ICU now and then transfer to Kessler in West Orange.

Please realize I know that you would like to see us and Darren and your intentions are appreciated, but right now is not a good time. As we figure out the move to Kessler he can have more visitors, but even then, he will be on quite a vigorous rehab schedule, and visitors will be few. I ask you all to please understand that and we'll do what is best for Darren. It's very difficult to say no to people when their intentions are so good, but it's so important for us to focus energy right now on just Darren.

Continue praying for him and leaving your messages. If Darren's hopes for a recovery depend on hard work and determination, we all know he will do whatever it takes. For the rest of us, we can love, support and pray that a miracle will help him walk again.

May God bless us and all of you.

Cynthia

July 30, 2004

Today is Friday, July 30th. Its hard to keep track of the day and date, but with all the notes I'm keeping, I do have to know that now. In the beginning, I was oblivious. Anyway, yesterday and today have been filled with doctor and therapy consults, and evaluating information on Rehab Centers. We are trying to decide between the Shepherd Center (Atlanta) and Kessler. Both excellent facilities, so its a tough decision. In the meantime, we are trying to enter Darren into a clinical research trial in Denver, CO. The study is complicated, but sounds encouraging. There is a chance that even after flying him there and evaluating him, he could be randomly chosen as a "control" and would not be able to participate, but it's worth a chance. We are very hopeful about the idea. I cannot explain it here, but if you have the inclination, you can check it out at www.proneutron.com. Today finds Darren's left triceps getting stronger, including his wrist. He has some strength in his right arm and wrist as well, but the left was stronger right from the beginning and is gaining strength nicely. We have exercises to do several times a day to help him. And again today he was able to sit up in a chair for 2 hours. That's a good thing overall. A little bit of a downside in participating in the study that it does involve a surgery, so we will once again be "post-op" which will hold up his therapy for a week or so. But if he is chosen, the benefits COULD be well worth it. Just say your prayers that he is first accepted into it, then once there, chosen as a participant. The chances are 2 of 3 are chosen randomly. Darren is slowly learning of the severity of his injury. John and I have come to grips with it, well, sort of, in the last 24 hours. At least enough to now take action and become pro-active in his care. The odds are definitely against him statistically, but we refuse to look at Darren as a statistic. With love, support, medical advances, hard work and determination, one never knows what the outcome can be. We are trying to be hopeful, while planning for the future - a very difficult balance to maintain. We feel your support and comfort and know that you are praying and hopeful as we are.

Until next time,

Cynthia

August 1, 2004

I am writing this on Sunday, August 1st. We are waiting to hear if Darren will be accepted into the clinical trial that is going on in Denver, as I previously mentioned. We still don't know. If he goes, he still has to be evaluated, then has to be randomly chosen to participate. Once he is there, if he gets to go at all, there is still a chance of not being able to be part of the study. If he is chosen, he will undergo a very delicate surgery procedure, and we will need your prayers for a successful surgery. When he is finished in Denver, either participating or not, he will be going to the Shepherd Center in Atlanta for rehabilitation. This will be at least a 2 month program.

We appreciate your cards and messages, and pass them onto Darren as we are able. His spirits continue to be good, but the severity of the injury is weighing heavily on us all. We appreciate your continued support and prayers.

Cynthia

August 2, 2004

Well, yesterday afternoon (Sunday) we were informed that Darren was not accepted into the clinical trial in Denver. We were disappointed, but now that the decision has been made, we are anxious, as is Darren, to get to rehab and get to work. We will be flying to Atlanta tomorrow morning (Tuesday) if all goes as planned. We are all anxious, excited and nervous at the same time. It will be a long road for sure, but we know it is the best place for Darren, and we will have support there as well. As soon as we are there and settled, I will give you more information, and a way to contact us. Your continued prayers and support are appreciated.

Cynthia

August 3, 2004

Hello everyone, we are excited to be moving out of the hospital today to The Shepherd Center in Atlanta. On this roller coaster of life for the past 10 days, today is an "up" day. We are anxious to get to Shepherd and begin healing - physically and emotionally. One of the Rehab Doctors gave us the first glimmer of hope we have heard so far, in that the level of injury can change (like from an A to a B perhaps) or it can go from a "complete" like Darren's to an "incomplete." I don't even know what that means, really, but I know it can be good. So we need your continued prayers, hope and support as we begin this long process. Darren is optimistic and determined to do his part, and I know that he will give it 200%. But I also know that there are going to be bumps in the road, some harder to manage than others, and I pray for the strength and support to get through the darkest of days. Please know that we appreciate everything you are doing to help us, and supporting Darren's positive attitude will do wonders for his recovery.

It might us a few days to get settled in Atlanta, but I will update you all as soon as possible.

With love and hope,

Cynthia